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1989

Book Review. The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement by Marco Mostert

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Recommended Citation

Fraher, Richard M., "Book Review. The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement by Marco Mostert" (1989). *Articles by Maurer Faculty*. 2513.
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MEDIEVAL

PETER GODMAN. *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry*. New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press. 1987. Pp. xviii, 199. \$45.00.

After a hiatus of two centuries, during which no poet had sung to that note, secular panegyric reappeared in the court of Charlemagne. The genre continued to draw authors during the rest of the Carolingian age. Neither the fact of this reemergence nor its character and significance had received the attention they deserved prior to the publication of the volume under review. Displaying a scholarship as discriminating as it is broad and deep, an unusual felicity and accuracy as a translator, and an unflinching lucidity of style, Peter Godman makes three main points about Carolingian panegyric. First, it was anything but homogeneous. The literary focus and strategy changed from reign to reign and from poet to poet. Second, panegyric sheds considerable light on Carolingian political and cultural history. And, third, the encomiasts appealed to a diverse group of sources as they commented on current events and on their own situations.

Following a helpful introductory chapter on Venantius Fortunatus as a transition figure between late Latin and Carolingian panegyric—a chapter that, aside from its relevance to his larger theme, provides a fresh and cogent reading of Venantius himself—Godman gives us three chapters presenting the Carolingian political poets in chronological order. He concludes by underlining the features of the genre that flowed into the Ottonian age. In Charlemagne's reign, he shows, poets such as Alcuin and Paul the Deacon renewed the secular encomium by praising the ruler as a *rex doctus* and by annexing that *topos* to sacred kingship and defense of the faith. In the 790s these religious and literary ideas were fused by Angilbert in the image of Charlemagne as the new David. With his imperial coronation in 800, a number of poets shifted to the invocation of Charlemagne as the new Augustus and turned to Vergil and other golden age poets as their chief models. Louis the Pious and his successors posed more of a challenge to encomiasts, especially those trying to second guess which claimant to the throne would succeed. Theodulph reflects the dissension among the heirs of Charlemagne. His appeal to the Ovid of the *Tristia* as a model suggests how that poet of exile could inform an author who found himself banished for backing the wrong horse. On the other hand, Sedulius could praise different contestants generically, and interchangeably, working as he did from the se-

cure base of episcopal patronage, which was growing more important in the mid-ninth century. In the reign of Charles the Bald, John Scottus added a Hellenic twist to the *rex doctus* theme, no doubt out of self-interest, and Hieric of Auxerre expanded it, recasting Charles as a Platonic philosopher-king.

These highlights, brief as they are, suggest the richness and pertinence of Godman's findings, for political and literary history alike. As he shows so successfully, Carolingian encomium is a valuable source for tracking both contemporary political events and political ideas. With respect to the classical tradition, and this is equally important, Godman strengthens the case for a Carolingian renaissance that did more than merely salvage and disseminate the classics, untouched by human hands. For, as he demonstrates, the political poets drew on the classical legacy with independence and creativity, reshaping the literary form of panegyric itself and making their own individual choices among their classical models. For all these reasons, this book stands as a major, and welcome, contribution to Carolingian studies, which should be required reading for any student of that period.

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MARCO MOSTERT. *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement*. (Middel-eeuwse Studies en Bronnen, number 2.) Hilversum, The Netherlands: Verloren. 1987. Pp. 224, f. 45.00.

Marco Mostert's study of the political theology of Abbo of Fleury is a modestly useful contribution to the literature concerning tenth-century monastic reform. At first glance, a study of the reformer's ideas about society and law seems to promise the reader a unique window through which one might view the interplay of the medieval monastic mindset and the social realities of tenth-century France. On closer examination, this volume provides a much narrower, and much less exciting, vista. Mostert's book is a largely mechanical study of the political and legal vocabulary employed by Abbo of Fleury. Mostert's methodological assumption is that a study of the legal and political terminology used by Abbo is his diverse writings, especially the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, the *Liber Apologeticus*, the *Collectio canonum*, and Abbo's letters, would yield "an imaginary text" (p. 19), comprising Abbo's political theology. Mostert's book professes to be a commentary on this imaginary political and social treatise.

There are serious problems with Mostert's assumption that the political, legal, and social terminology employed by an author throughout a heterogeneous medley of writings amounts to the same thing as the political, legal, and social ideas of the same author, arrayed in a single, coherent exposition of his "political theology." Context counts, and the context in which Abbo of Fleury employed his political vocabulary was the fragmented, unfocused range of his occasional writings, composed for specific and transient purposes.

As a result, Mostert's study struggles to rise above the level of a mere glossary of Abbo's vocabulary. The introductory chapters, which detail Abbo's career from ca. 940 to 1004, point out that Abbo's early life as a monastic schoolteacher and librarian sculpted the ideas and concerns of the mature, politically active reforming abbot. But, despite the efforts to place Abbo in a broader context, Mostert's portrait of the abbot is unidimensional. Mostert's narrow vision of Abbo's "political theology" results from one of two contingencies. Either Abbo himself failed to consider society, law, and politics in light of any issue beyond the immediate struggle for monastic exemption from episcopal control, or else Mostert fails to connect Abbo's use of political or theological terms to any context save the most obvious and pressing of the abbot's social perceptions and political concerns. One suspects that a more sensitive reading of Abbo's works might have produced a richer yield.

Despite these fundamental limitations, Mostert's study makes a useful contribution to our understanding of late tenth-century social, political, and legal ideas by illustrating how the tenth-century monastic reformers adapted conventional medieval notions about clerical and lay society, kingship both ideal and practical, and authority within the church. Unfortunately, even at this level, the book is slightly marred by the Dutch author's difficulty expressing himself in English. For example Mostert refers to the "siege" of Cahors (p. 60) meaning the see of Cahors, and he quotes Abbo's discussion of a papal privilege "which I, though unworthy, have earned to receive" (p. 58). Careful editing might have significantly improved the presentation.

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JEAN-PIERRE DEVROEY. *Le polyptyque et les listes de biens de l'abbaye Saint-Pierre de Lobbes (IX^e–XI^e siècles)*. Brussels: Palais des Académies. 1986. Pp. cxxvi, 84.

Jean-Pierre Devroey, author of an earlier critical edition, *Le polyptyque et les listes de cens de l'abbaye de Saint-Remi de Reims* (1984), presents here an introduction (pp. xviii–cxxvi) and revised edition of the previously published Lobbes documents. The edited texts (pp. 3–58) are followed by an exhaustive table of names of persons and places and a useful index of technical terms.

At issue are three documents now surviving only in eighteenth-century copies: a polyptyque called the *descriptio villarum* and two lists of monastic property holdings. In a well-argued, revisionist dating schema, Devroey reasons that the *descriptio villarum* is not the fragment of a larger polyptyque but rather, in a first section of the present manuscript, an inventory of the properties attached to the conventual *mensa* in 868–69. Another section contains what is, in essence, a second polyptyque, related to the functions of custodian of the church, doorkeeper, and hospitaler and dated to 889, shortly after the division of the monastic patrimony between the monks of Lobbes and the bishop of Liège, who assumed administration of the abbey following a decision by Arnoul of Carinthia. Interpolations of these documents took place in the years 960–65; the list of 889 was revised and amplified again in the early eleventh century.

The short list of possessions, the "liste courte" in the author's terminology, is a simple enumeration of properties, including 137 *villae*, dated to the 889 division, with later interpolations in the domains of certain *pagi*. The "liste longue" (late tenth century to 1038) is based on the "liste courte," but with the addition of 46 *villae* and certain toponymic modernizations as well as modifications in the order of the list. Demographic growth with new centers of population and the expansion of temporal holdings accounted for the evolution in monastic patrimony.

Devroey sees at Lobbes in 868–69 the concrete realization of Carolingian orders for the inventorying of monastic properties. The reserve was described without mention of courtyard buildings (*curtis*) but with the extent of lands and meadows in *bunuarua*. The woods were measured in pasturing potential of pigs, the vineyards in *modii* of wine produced. The peasant tenures (*mansi*), 527 in all, fell into the categories of 69.6 percent without label, 26.9 percent *ingenuiles*, 2.7 percent *serviles*, with one *villa* having *mansi lidorum*. Devroey reasons that the servile tenures had to be listed since they were exempt from military service. The most startling lacuna concerns the inhabitants. Only the *haistaldi*, a marginal group of peasants, were mentioned in any detail, thereby eliminating the possibility of controversial demographic studies of inhabitants of the Lobbes estates. Dues owed in